

Phoenix Suns General Manager Search: Who Can Get Things Back To Normal?

Written by
Thursday, 25 April 2013 15:03 -



The last strategy for the [Phoenix Suns](#) , while looking for a general manager that was qualified enough as a basketball mind to be trusted in piecing together a championship contender, was simple. Grab whatever apple fell off of the [San Antonio Spurs](#) ' family tree next.

That was part of the reason why Lance Blanks ended up as the man for the job, as well as the fact that the Suns were turned down by options one, two, and three in succession.

When President of Basketball Operations Lon Babby described the general manager he was looking for the terms "cultural fit" and "basketball guru" were identifiable. The hiring of Blanks was met with a confident, "perfect choice" description by Babby.

In a sense, they settled for the fourth man on the list and it showed over the course of three long seasons culminating with the franchises most frustrating season to date. Clearly not a "perfect choice."

Blanks came from a winning culture, but his ideas were always funneled through other basketball minds. His decisions were never the final decisions, but rather the suggestions to the man in charge.

He received praise and credit for [Tony Parker](#) , [Luis Scola](#) , and [J.J. Hickson](#) at his previous two stops, which was because his role was to bring information in for others to decipher. During his tenure in Phoenix, Blanks zeroed in on [Markieff Morris](#) , [Iman Shumpert](#) , and [Kendall Marshall](#)

Phoenix Suns General Manager Search: Who Can Get Things Back To Normal?

Written by

Thursday, 25 April 2013 15:03 -

. With no filter, the vision of Blanks left much to be desired.

That has to change this year, and in a few ways, the situation has changed considerably.

Three years ago the Suns were a team in obvious need of a transition from the old guard to a rebuild. The team was constructed around two upper 30's leaders that were what this team needed in the years prior, but where not what they needed going forward. There are classy ways to speed up the exit strategy of a [Steve Nash](#) (then 36) and a [Grant Hill](#) (then 38), but instead the team allowed that "era of Suns basketball" to, as Babby put it, "run its course."

In the NBA, nothing runs its course. There are teams that are proactive and those that are reactive.

The proactive teams trade stars like [Deron Williams](#) for [Derrick Favors](#) and picks or trade [Carmelo Anthony](#) for an entire playoff roster of quality talent. Reactive teams wait two years too long and are saddled with first round picks with strings attached to them or second round picks with dust in their face.

Now that that era has run its course, the team is looking to get things back on track with what amounts to clean slate. The reset button has been pushed if you will. A new GM will take the wheel with major decisions at hand, including selecting a head coach, making a top 5 pick, and creating an identity for this franchise.

The latter part of that trio may be the easiest.

In 45 years of Suns basketball, there may not be a more stable franchise that has never won a championship. They have reached the playoffs 28 times (62.2%), won 45+ games a total of 24 times (53.3%), and have only had 14 "losing" seasons.

Phoenix Suns General Manager Search: Who Can Get Things Back To Normal?

Written by

Thursday, 25 April 2013 15:03 -

The previous general manager decided it was time for that "soil", as he referred to it, to be changed for the franchise to get the proper culture in place. Instead of making this a more fertile place for basketball to blossom in that next "era in Suns basketball," Blanks may have covered the virtuous soil with hardpan.

Three years ago Milwaukee's assistant general manager Jeff Weltman, New Orleans' current general manager Dell Demps, and current Utah general manager Dennis Lindsey said thanks, but no thanks to the Phoenix Suns.

Demps has a very favorable situation building around a No. 1 overall pick in [Anthony Davis](#) while Lindsey has a

[Jazz](#)

team that is only a piece or two away from being a perennial playoff contender again. The wildcard is Weltman who, with the

[Bucks](#)

, may be the general manager in waiting, but could also be pining for a blank canvas like the Suns to break out as "the man."

Weltman is a unique situation with being the No. 2 man in Milwaukee for five years now and having freshly inked a new three-year extension to stay with the Bucks through 2016. Would he pass up the opportunity to run a team if offered again?

A few other names that will make the rounds who are potential candidates are: former [Indiana Pacers](#)

general manager David Morway, former

[Denver Nuggets](#)

executive, former

[Los Angeles Lakers](#)

assistant general manager Ronnie Lester, and

[Oklahoma City Thunder](#)

assistant general manager Troy Weaver .

Chasing the "name" is far too risky in this climate of Suns basketball. Sure, bringing in Grant Hill or Charles Barkley to let them cut their teeth in the front office would be great for ticket sales and would appease the fans for that moment, but they *would be cutting their teeth in the front office* . If Babby can bring either of them

Phoenix Suns General Manager Search: Who Can Get Things Back To Normal?

Written by

Thursday, 25 April 2013 15:03 -

in as an assistant GM or in some other capacity, then you can groom them, but keep them on a leash.

The potential home run could be [Boston Celtics](#) assistant GM Ryan McDonough. He has been [profiled here on SB Nation](#) as the league's next great basketball mind. The profile did him justice, but learning from the maverick Danny Ainge, while already being known as a prolific scout, is a one-two punch that exemplifies "basketball mind."

No matter who owner Robert Sarver and Babby decide on, they cannot settle for the fourth man on the list again. They simply cannot afford to lose another three years.

Editors Note: I reached out to Jeff Weltman and Ryan McDonough for comment, neither were available for comment as their teams are competing in the playoffs